



COUNTY OF ERIE MARK POLONCARZ

COUNTY EXECUTIVE

GALE R. BURSTEIN, MD, MPH, FAAP
COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

HEALTH ADVISORY #317

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IMPORTED DOGS WITH QUESTIONABLE RABIES DOCUMENTATION

Please distribute to Veterinarians and Animal Control Officers

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has received reports of an increasing number of dogs with questionable documentation of prior rabies vaccination. The dogs are being imported into the United States from rabies-endemic countries.

Imported dogs

- are sold on-line, by independent sellers, or in pet stores.
- are adopted through both U.S. and international sources.
- may be purebred, hybrid, or mixed breeds; distributors may claim to have or may even provide breed registration papers.
- may be incorrectly identified as having been born and raised in the United States.

BACKGROUND:

CDC has learned of several instances when importers have provided inaccurate rabies vaccine certificates for puppies arriving into the United States. These documents state that the puppies are older than 4 months of age and fully immunized against rabies. However, upon examination, these animals were found to be less than 4 months old and sometimes as young as 4-8 weeks of age. Documentation has also included falsification of birth location and breed registration.

Federal regulations require that dogs coming from rabies-endemic countries be fully immunized against rabies [i.e., puppies at least 3 months of age must receive the initial rabies vaccination at least 30 days prior to U.S. arrival, and adult dogs (i.e., ≥ 15 months old) should be current on rabies booster vaccination]. Dogs that are not fully immunized and are coming from rabies-endemic countries may be allowed entry into the United States, at the discretion of CDC, if the importer signs a confinement agreement. This agreement requires the importer to confine the dogs at a specified location until they can be vaccinated against rabies and for 30 days thereafter. Adult dogs with a history of previous rabies vaccination (i.e., expired vaccination) may be released from confinement immediately after revaccination.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

CDC recommends that veterinarians request the original rabies vaccination certificates (and English translations, if necessary) for any new patients. Veterinarians should strongly recommend that a dog be vaccinated against rabies by their clinic if:

- the client is unable to provide the original certificate;
- the certificate comes from an unknown source; or
- the reported age does not match the physical appearance of the puppy.

REQUESTED ACTIONS:

Please direct any questions about rabies vaccine or health certificates to the local animal control agency. Clients may also be referred to the CDC website or the websites below for any questions regarding zoonotic disease risks, animal importation requirements, and traveling with pets.

CDC:

- Animal Importation information <http://www.cdc.gov/animalimportation/>
- Rabies-Free Countries list <http://www.cdc.gov/animalimportation/rabies-free-countries.html>
- Confinement Agreement <http://www.cdc.gov/animalimportation/pdf/dog-import.pdf>
- Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr6006.pdf>
- Healthy Pets Healthy People <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/HealthyPets>

New York State:

- <http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/zoonoses/rabies/>

Health Category Definitions:

Health Alert FLASH: conveys the highest level of importance due to a large-scale, catastrophic public health emergency; warrants immediate action or attention

Health Alert Priority: conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention to a health problem or situation

Health Advisory: provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

Health Update: provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary

The Erie County Department of Health does not provide medical advice. The information provided on the Erie County Department of Health website is not an attempt to practice medicine and is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. It is for informational purposes only. Always seek the advice of your personal physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition or issue. Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of the content found on the Erie County Department of Health website or this correspondence.

The ECDOH Health Alert & Advisory System is an e-mail notification system designed to alert community partners about important health related information. You can sign up to receive alerts & advisories at <http://www2.erie.gov/health/index.php?q=node/59>.